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14 Indians Minor League Finishes

By Alex Slemc The Cleveland Indians are on top in the American League right now, but there are many stars in the Indians organization who have yet to set foot in Jacobs Field. Those players are part of the Indians minor league organization. They are the Tribesmen of the future. Here's a look at the players and the season each farm club has had.

18 The Bridesmaids Of Baseball

by Jack DeVries The term "always a bridesmaid, never a bride" certainly rang true for several teams in Indians history. But coming in second didn't necessarily mean they weren't good enough to make the grade. As you'll find out, extenuating circumstances, and a few anecdotes, all came into play.

26 The Contenders

by Jim Ingraham It's been a long battle in the American League this year. Here's a look at the others who came out on top and those who battled for the Wild Card at press time. Baltimore (page 26), Chicago (page 28), New York (page 30), Seattle (page 32), and Texas (page 77).

36 Let's Rock

by Steve Herrick Being in the post-season may be the biggest dream a professional ballplayer could ever have. And every year, that dream comes true for a select few. Last season, more than one dream was realized in Cleveland. This year, those players are looking to improve upon what was already the best feeling of their lives.

64 New Kids In Town

by Steve Herrick and Tom Bochenek Late in the season, the Cleveland Indians made two key acquisitions—Kevin Seitzer and Jose Vizcaino. Both are new to Cleveland, but they are no means strangers on the diamond.

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Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon

FAMILY TIES

Brian Giles is a solid hitter, hitting .310 or better in each minor league season since 1993. He's a hard-nosed player with a quick bat and decent power, hitting 15+ homers in each season since '94. He's also been named to the post-season All-Star team of his respective league in the last three seasons as he climbed the Indians farm system.

You could say that Brian Giles is solid and dependable, and you could also say that he gets it from his grandfather. You see, Brian's grandfather, Richard Owen, has shown that same dependability when it came to watching his grandson play every home game he's played in since 1992.

Richard has followed Brian along his minor league journey each season since June of 1992 when Brian played with the AA Canton-Akron Indians.

Brian's path has taken Richard

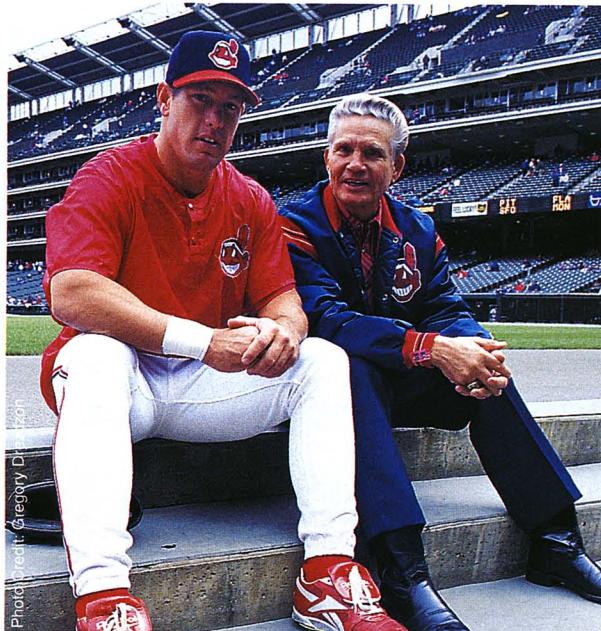


Photo Credit: Gregory DiMarino

to Class AA Canton-Akron in 1992 and '93, Class AAA Charlotte (NC) in 1994, and Class AAA Buffalo (NY) in '95. Brian split the 1996 season between Buffalo and the big leagues. Oh yeah, his grandfather also split the season between Buffalo and Cleveland as well.

"It's nice to have someone close to you that's so supportive in such

a high-pressure environment," said Giles. "He and my grandmother were always there when I was in little league through high school, so it kind of feels natural. We do lunch a lot when the team is at home and on the weekend, we'll grab a bite after the game."

Richard spends most of his time away from the ballpark in his motor home that takes him from El Cajon, CA, to wherever Brian is playing every spring. He's an avid skeet shooter and actually writes articles for *Sporting Clays Magazine* and *Skeet Shooting Review*. He only follows Brian on the road if that city has a skeet shooting range he has never seen.

"My favorite stop thus far has been in Charlotte, NC," said Owen. "The weather was always nice, my home was close to the ballpark, and they had a great skeet shooting range a few miles from the stadium."

IT'S HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME

Over 2,000 Cleveland area youngsters, ages 7-14, participated in the first-ever Cleveland Indians/SportsChannel Baseball Skills Competition this season. Developed under SportsChannel's KIDSWIN Community Relations initiative, this fun-filled event was created to share the success of Cleveland Indians Baseball with local communities and encourage honest competition for youths through active participation.

Competitions were held at six regional sites throughout the area from June 15-July 27.

The final competition came together at Jacobs Field, as each of the 24 final participants competed in four age categories, performing three baseball skills: hitting, pitching, and running.

Winners were crowned champions during the August 19 Indians vs. Texas game and received special recognition during the televised game, as well as dugout suite tickets and a photo plaque signed by Manager Mike Hargrove. Winners left to right: James Kreibel from Struthers, OH (7-8); Christopher Niro from Walton Hills, OH (9-10); Ryan Swaney from Mentor, OH (11-12); Greg DiMarino from North Royalton, OH (13-14).



Photo Credit: Anthony Gray

LET'S ROCK

by Steve Herrick

The 1995 post-season was an unforgettable experience for many, especially the fans who jammed Jacobs Field and roared at every pitch.

But for the ones who experienced it firsthand, not only were the moments of that dream season unforgettable, they were part of a learning experience.

The members of that 1995 team have fond memories, and they're using those moments in preparation for another exciting October...

Jim Thome hit four home runs and drove in nine runs during the playoffs last year.

"I take a lot of pride in that," he said. "To be able to come through like that in the playoffs with that kind of pressure hopefully

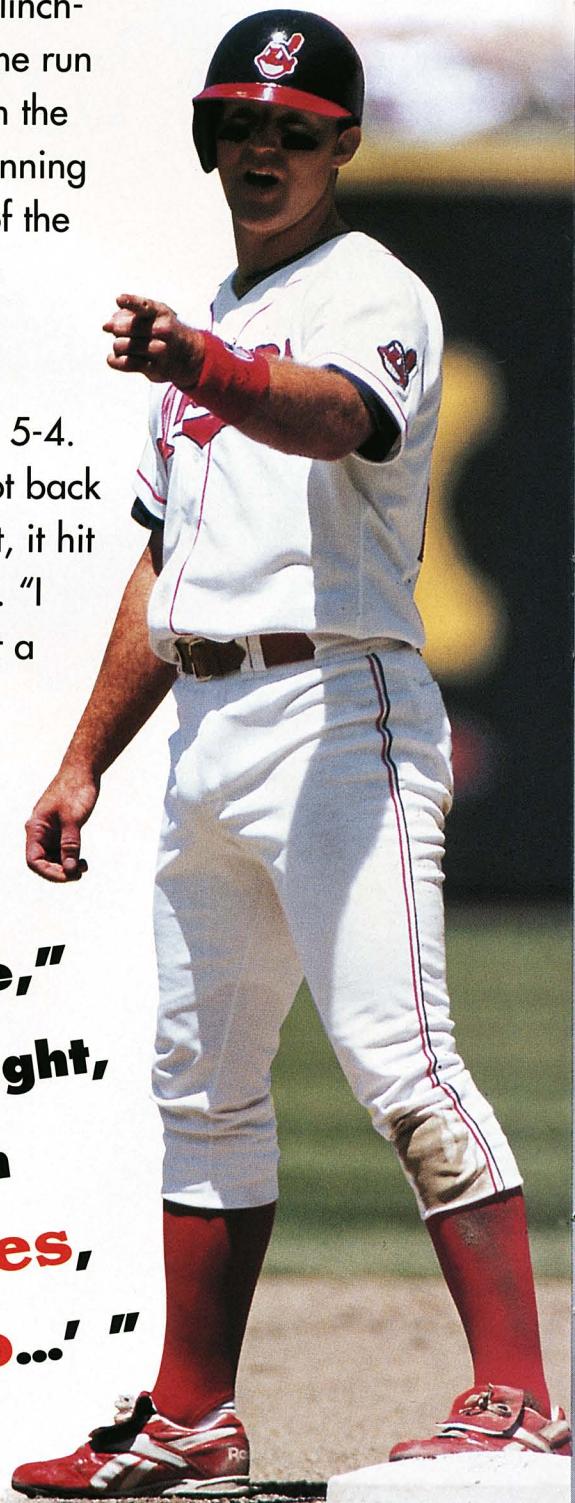
will help me this time."

Thome particularly remembers the game-clinching home run he hit in the eighth inning

of Game 5 of the World Series against the Braves. The Indians won, 5-4.

"When I got back to the dugout, it hit me," he said. "I thought, 'I hit a home run in the World Series,

and I hit a bomb.' To do something to help your team win a game in the World Series is a



"When I got back in the dugout, it hit me," Thome said. "I thought, 'I hit a home run in the World Series, and I hit a bomb...'"

"The crowd rose to its feet. That sound energized me completely. I felt like it was the first inning again."

special feeling."

Thome thinks being in the post-season last year will help this time.

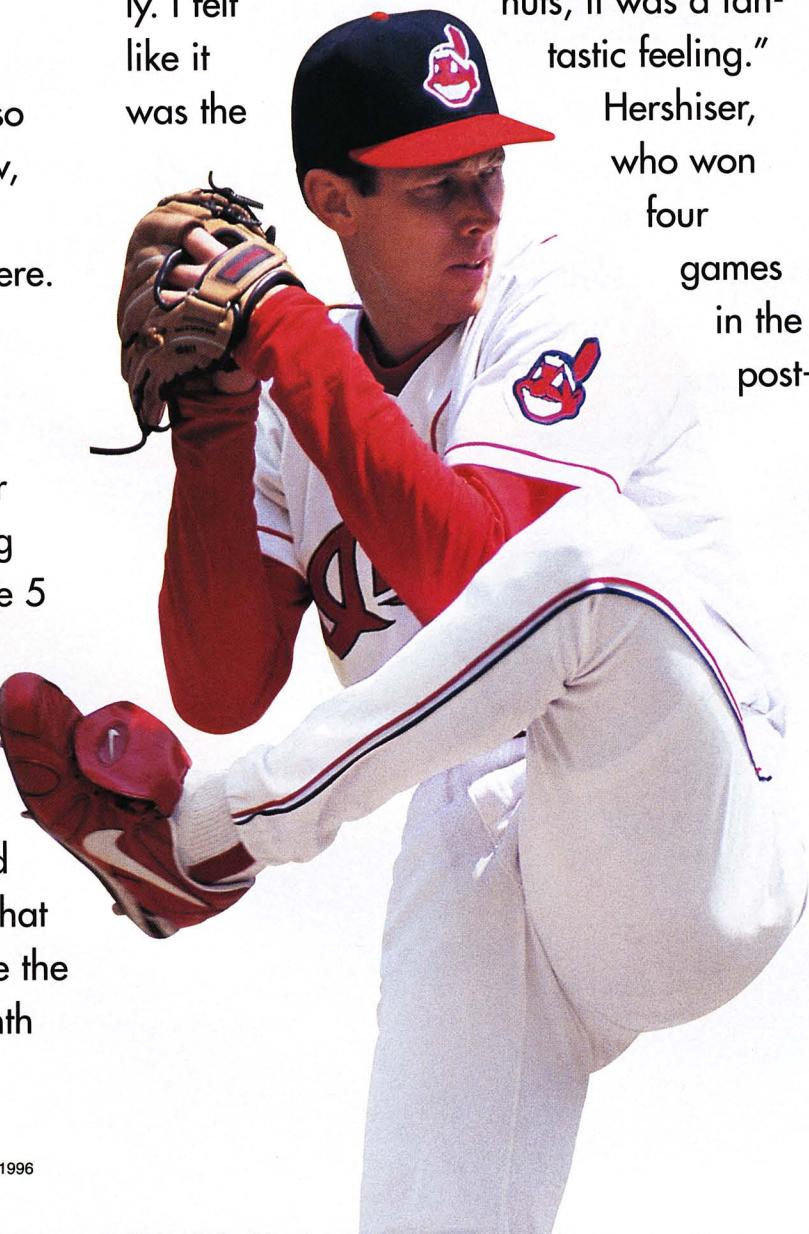
"It's like the Braves last year," he said. It's experience. They had been there before and it helped them. The playoffs are a totally different mind-set.

Everything is so intensified. Now, we've got guys who've been there. It won't hurt."

◆◆◆

Orel Hershiser was the winning pitcher in Game 5 of the World Series. He remembers how he felt when he started a double play that helped preserve the lead in the eighth inning.

"The crowd rose to its feet," he said. "That sound energized me completely. I felt like it was the first inning again. When I got out of the inning, and I heard the crowd go nuts, it was a fantastic feeling." Hershiser, who won four games in the post-



season last year, is known for keeping his poise during the playoffs, but the screaming fans at Jacobs Field made it difficult.

"There's a lot more emotion going on inside me than I show," he said. "I was trying to keep it inside me and use it in the right way."

Hershiser admits the post-season brings on more pressure.

"It's hard to do, but you have to treat it like a regular season game," he said.

◆◆◆

Omar Vizquel's most memorable moment came when the Indians won Game 6 of the American League Championship

Series in Seattle to advance to the World Series. He wants to experience the thrill again.

"It was unforgettable. In the ninth inning, we were all excited and nervous. When we got the last out, I wasn't sure what to do. I was jumping up and down. Then I ran around looking for somebody to hug. It's something I'm going to be telling people about 30 years from now.

Omar Vizquel thinks the team learned a lot

from last season's playoff experience.

"It was tough last year because most of us hadn't been in the playoffs and the team hadn't been there in such a long time," he said. "It was hard for some of the younger players."

Vizquel thinks the experience will be beneficial.

"Now that we've been there, we'll know what to expect," he said. "We'll know how to deal with the press. Last year,

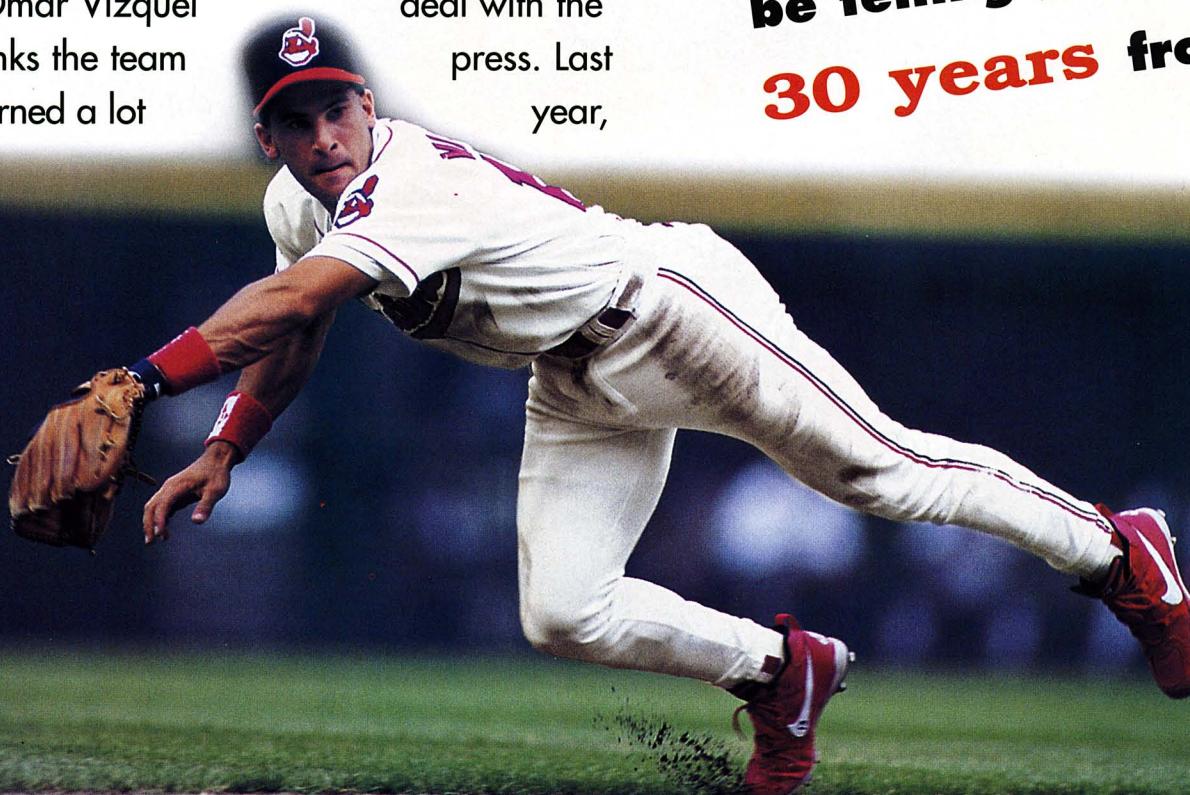
I didn't read the papers, or watch TV during the playoffs. You have to stay focused. You have to block out everything and keep it like a regular season game."

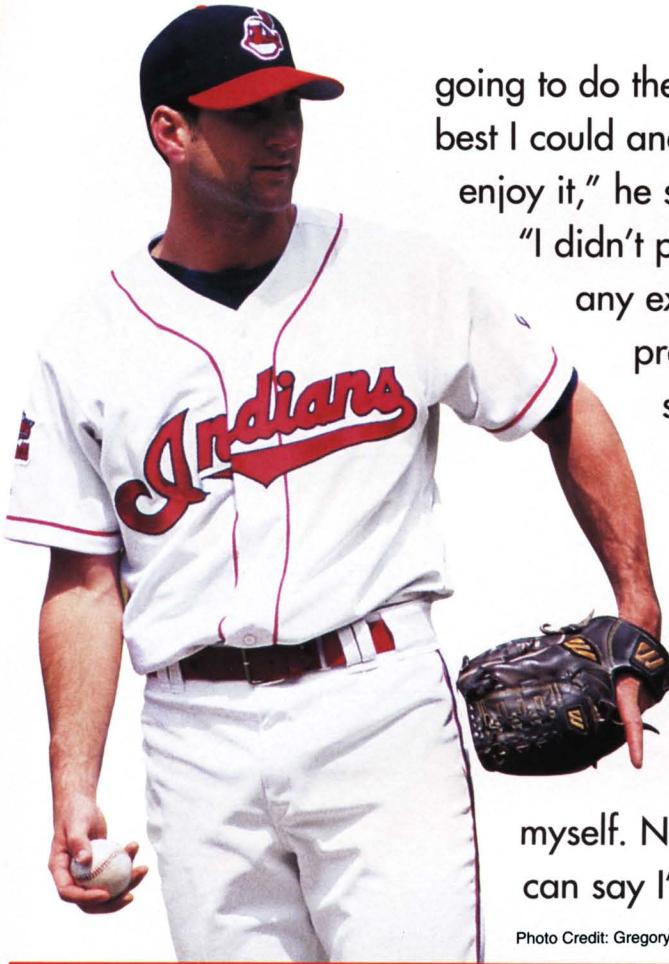
◆◆◆

Charles Nagy won a game in last year's Division Series and pitched well in his two post-season starts.

"I went into the playoffs with the attitude that I was

"When we got the last out, I wasn't sure what to do. I was jumping up and down... It's something I'm going to be telling people about 30 years from now."





going to do the best I could and enjoy it," he said.

"I didn't put any extra pressure on

myself. Now, I can say I've

Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon

pitched in the playoffs and gained some experience. Having Orel and Dennis around was a big help for me.

"It didn't really hit me until a couple of weeks after the playoffs. There's so much happening when the games are going on that you don't have too much time to think about it. A few

weeks after it was over, I thought, 'I actually pitched in the playoffs and the World Series!'"

Nagy thinks the Indians can approach this year's playoffs differently.

"Just going through what we went through last year will help," he said. "Last season was the first time many of us had

HOMI

PARK, DINE, PLAY. THE
TAKE THE AVENUE

been through it. Now we know how strenuous it is."



While the pressure is magnified in the playoffs, Eric Plunk thinks it's also a time to have fun.

"It's going to have to be a little more enjoyable," he said.

"We're going to have to give it our best and enjoy it—

only people who will benefit from last year.

"The experience is hard to

whatever happens."

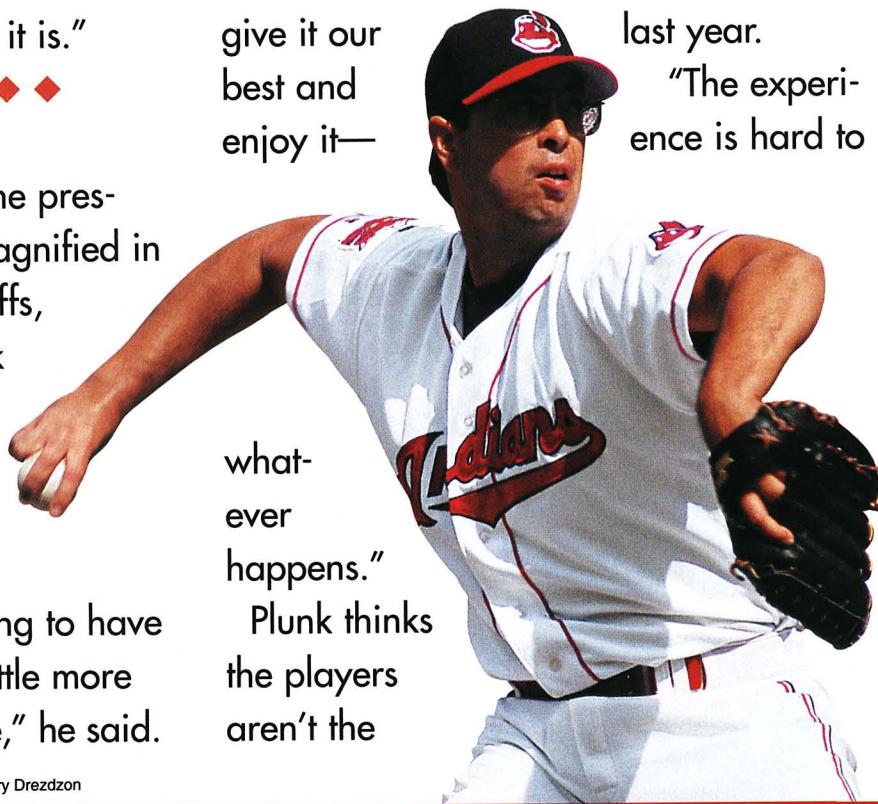
Plunk thinks the players aren't the

replace," he said. "I think it will help us, as well as the coaching staff and management."

Plunk thinks the media crush makes the playoffs much different than the regular season.

"That situation was pretty bad (last year)," he said. "I was in the Series with Oakland in '88. There's always

Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon



E BASE

FUN STARTS HERE.
TO THE BALLPARK.



a lot going on. You have to make a little more effort to shut it out."



Jack McDowell doesn't think the media attention is the determining factor in the playoffs.

"Whether the distractions happen or not, it depends on how you're

throwing at the moment," he said. "The reporters aren't on the field with you. When you get on the field, that's the important thing."



Chad Ogea thinks concentration is the key in the playoffs.

"If you let the distractions get to you, they will," he

said. "If you just play baseball and have fun, it's a lot easier to deal with. It should be easier to handle this time. Look at Atlanta, they had a lot of guys with World Series experience and I think it helped them last year."

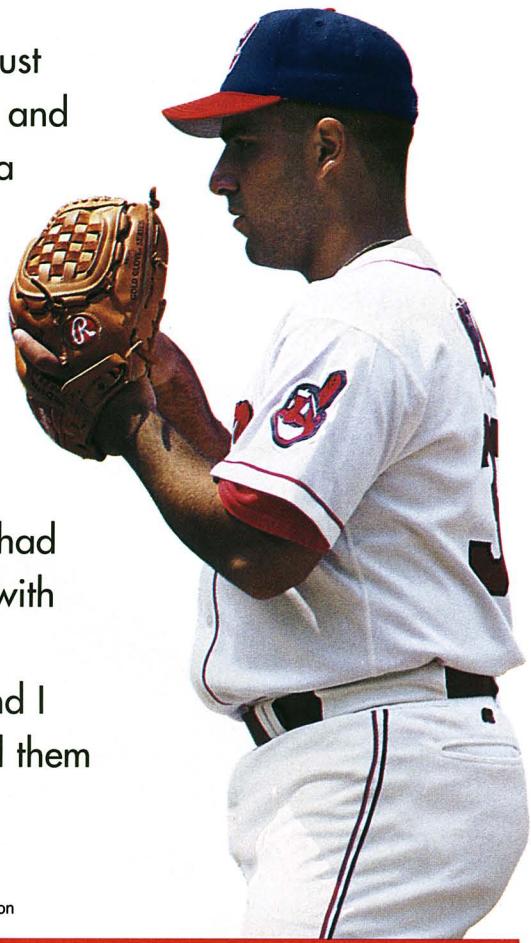
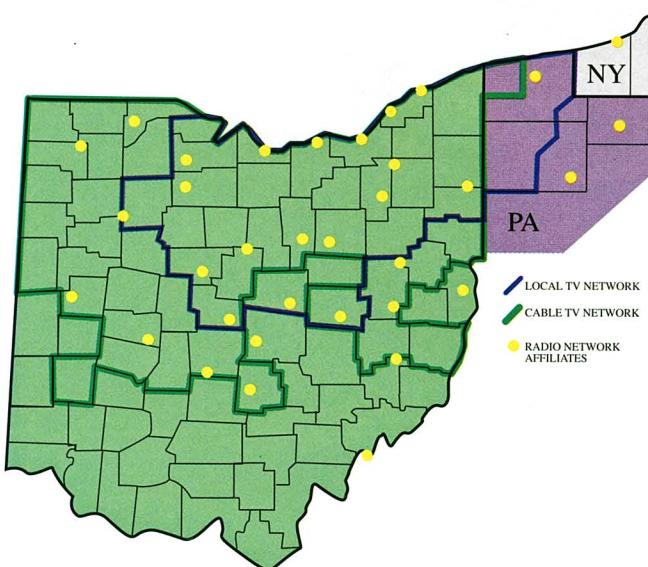


Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon

Indians

1996 RADIO NETWORK

FLAGSHIP STATION— SPORTSRADIO WKRN 1220 AM (Cleveland)



Ohio

WAKR-AM	Akron, Ohio	1590	WUCO-AM	Marysville, Ohio	1270
WFUN-AM	Ashland, Ohio	970	WJAU-FM	McConnelsville, Ohio	101.0
WBNU-FM	Barnesville, Ohio	93.5	WMUO-AM	Mount Vernon, Ohio	1300
WBLL-AM	Bellefontaine, Ohio	1390	WCLT-AM	Newark, Ohio	1430
WQCT-AM	Bryan, Ohio	1520	WLKR-FM	Norwalk, Ohio	95.3
WBMO-FM	Bryan, Ohio	100.9	WBKC-AM	Painesville, Ohio	1460
WQEL-FM	Bucyrus, Ohio	92.7	WLEC-AM	Sandusky, Ohio	1450
WHBC-AM	Canton, Ohio	1480	WCWA-AM	Toledo, Ohio	1230
WMHI-AM	Columbus, Ohio	920	WBTC-AM	Urichsville, Ohio	1540
WDLR-AM	Delaware, Ohio	1550	WAHR-AM	Warren, Ohio	1570
WDOD-FM	Delphos, Ohio	107.1	WQKT-FM	Wooster, Ohio	104.5
WJER-AM	Dover, Ohio	1450	WRTK-AM	Youngstown, Ohio	1390
WEOL-AM	Elyria, Ohio	930	WYBZ-FM	Zanesville, Ohio	107.3
WFIN-AM	Findlay, Ohio	1330			
WFQB-AM	Fostoria, Ohio	1430			
WLOH-AM	Lancaster, Ohio	1320			
WMAN-AM	Mansfield, Ohio	1400			
WMRN-AM	Marion, Ohio	1490			

Pennsylvania

WWCB-AM	Corry, PA	1370
WRIE-AM	Erie, PA	1260

New York

WDDE-AM	Dunkirk, NY	1410
WSPQ-AM	Springville, NY	1330

Dennis Martinez will always remember being the winning pitcher in Game 6 of the '95 AL Championship Series. Not only did that win put the Indians in the World Series, it was also the first post-season victory in Martinez's career.

"That was a very special moment for me," he said. "It was something I'd been trying to do for a long time."

Martinez thinks post-season experience is invaluable.

"It's something we have to our advantage this time," he said.

"We know what it feels like. Most of the guys here have already been there now. That's a real plus."

Martinez admits the playoffs are a

"Now we know how important every out and every pitch are. On every play, you have to play hard."

Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon, 1996

—Sandy Alomar

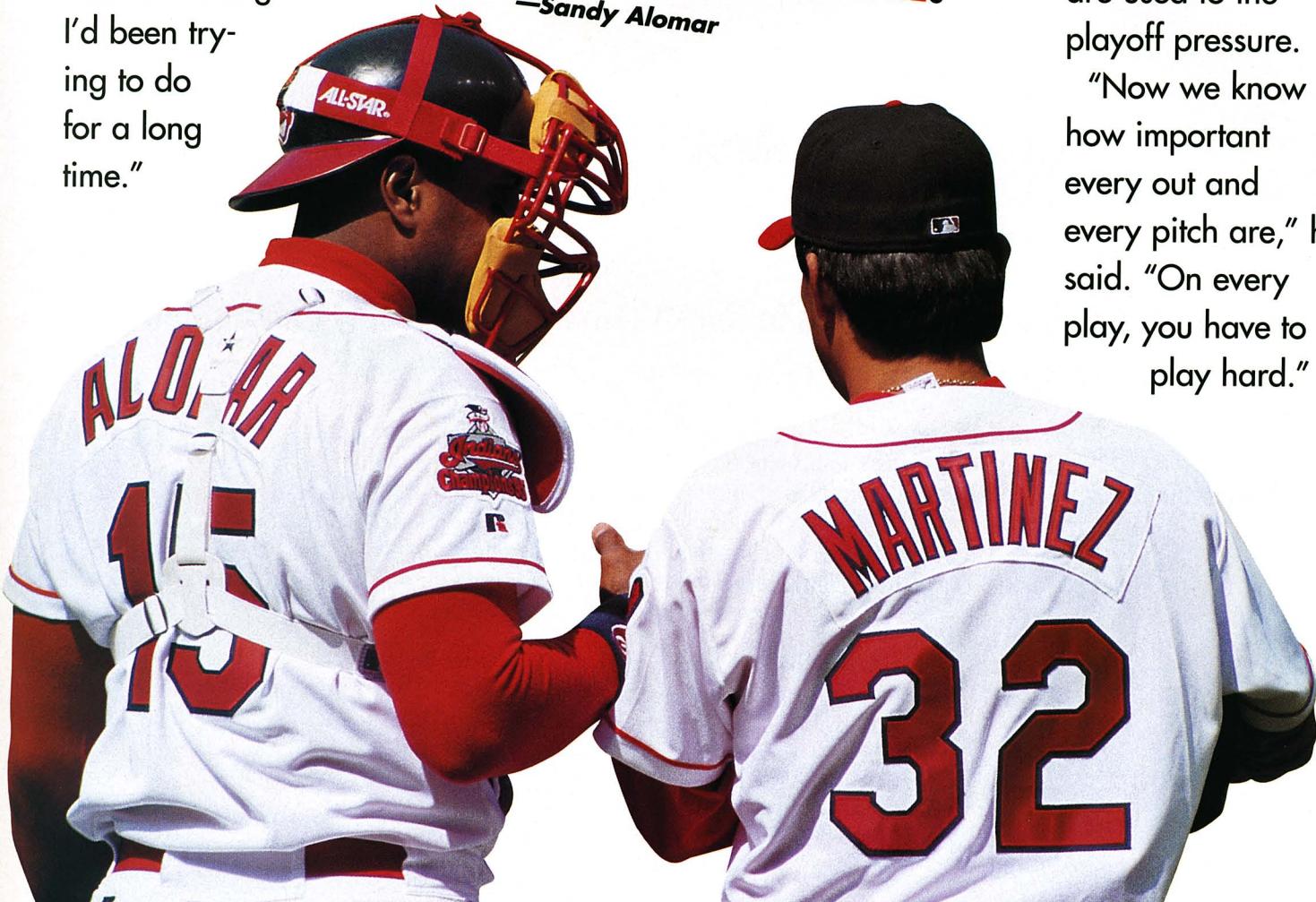
different ballgame.

"Players have to put up with more," he said. "There's more media around. There're a lot of interviews to do. If you're not used to it, it's tough. Now, I think we'll know how to handle it."



Sandy Alomar thinks the Indians are used to the playoff pressure.

"Now we know how important every out and every pitch are," he said. "On every play, you have to play hard."



Alomar had a game-tying double in the eighth inning of Game 3 of the World Series, which the Indians won in 11 innings.

"That's the kind of situation everybody hopes for," he said. "You always want to get into a key situation like that and deliver late in the game. Hopefully, if I get into a situation like that again, it will help me."

Alomar doesn't think the distractions will bother the Indians as much this post-season.

"We learned how to deal with it," he said. "It's not the same as the regular season. Everybody wants to interview you. The first year, it's kind of difficult, but after that, you

learn what to expect."

Alomar remembers the reception the Indians got at the airport when they returned home from Atlanta after losing Game 6 of the World Series.

"The fans all came out to see us. Even though we had lost the World Series, they still came out to greet us. It was cold and in the middle of the night, but the fans were still there. That meant a lot to all of us."

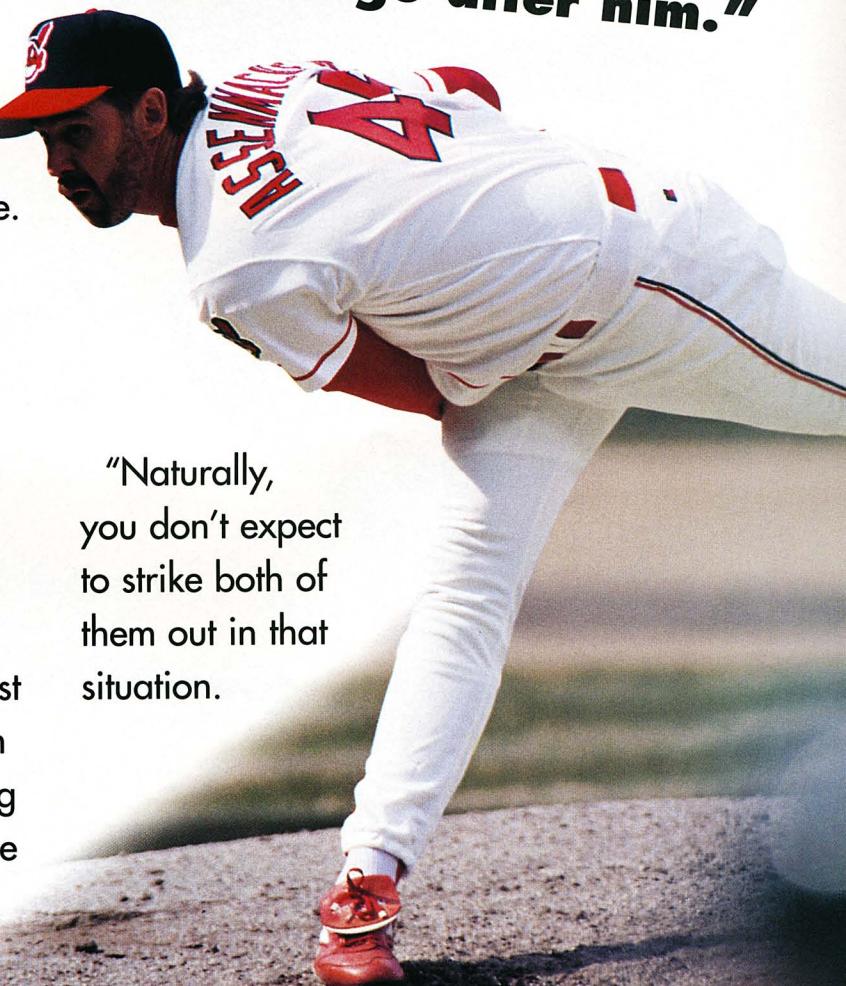


Paul Assenmacher's big moment in last year's playoffs came in Game 5 of the ALCS against the Mariners. With the Indians clinging to a 3-2 lead in the

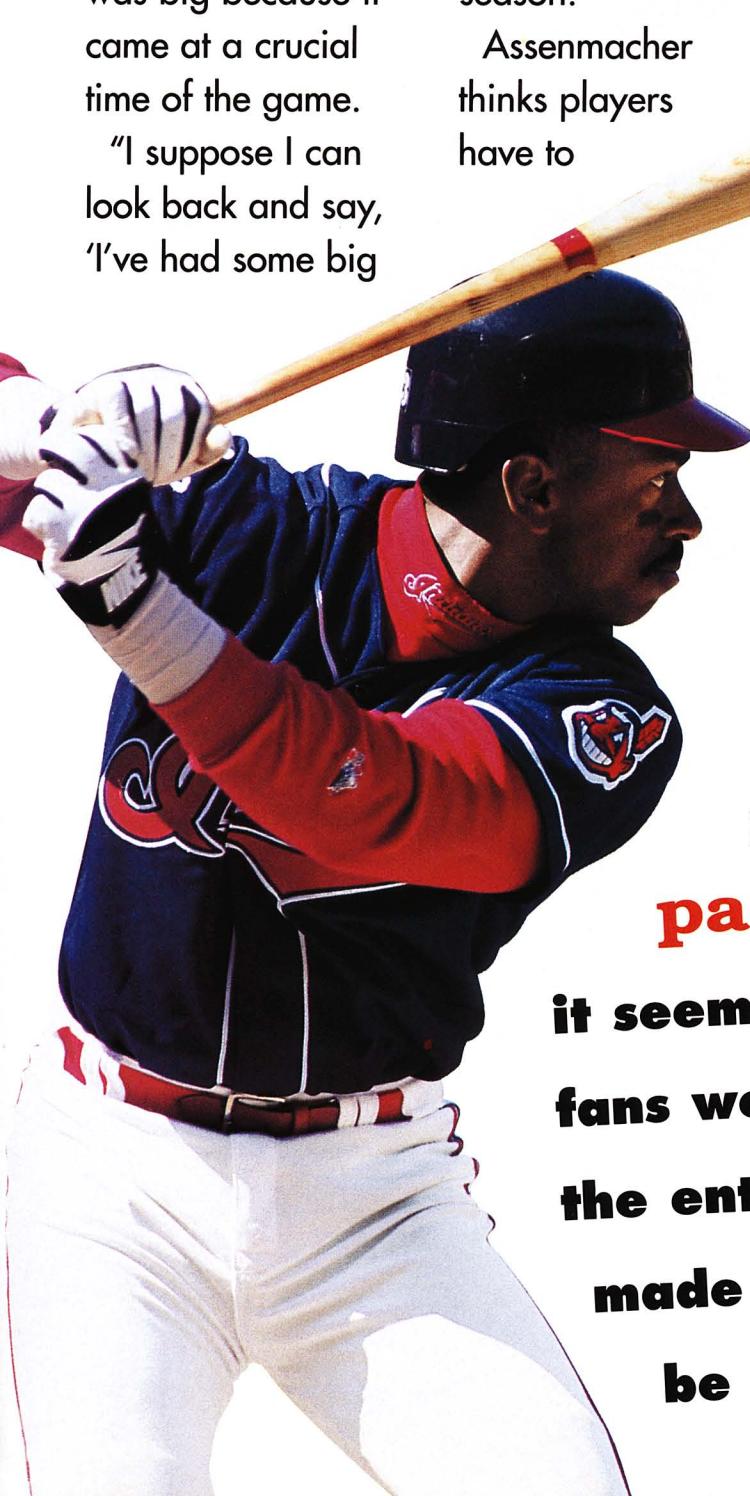
seventh inning, he struck out Ken Griffey Jr. and Jay Buhner with two men on.

"...you don't expect to strike both of them out... Getting Griffey out was key. Once I got two strikes on Buhner, I wanted to go after him."

You're just hoping to make good pitches and, hopefully, you'll get them out. Getting Griffey out was key. Once



"Naturally, you don't expect to strike both of them out in that situation."



I got two strikes on Buhner, I wanted to go after him. I threw him a curveball higher than I wanted to, but he swung over it. It was big because it came at a crucial time of the game.

"I suppose I can look back and say, 'I've had some big

games before, so there's no reason I can't do it again," he said. "Once the game starts, it's no different than it was in the regular season."

Assenmacher thinks players have to

forget about the pressure and distractions.

"The number one thing you've got to do is get ready for the game," he said.

"You have to block that stuff out and get the job done. Since we experienced it last year, we'll know how to control it better this time."



"...The Ball-park was packed and it seemed like the fans were yelling the entire game. It made me want to be a part of it."

After playing in Japan last season, Julio Franco watched the play-offs on television. Having played for the Indians from 1983-'88, he watched with a certain amount of pride.

"I knew a lot of the guys on the team, and I could see how exciting it was for them. I could also see how much fun the fans were having—how much it meant to them to have their team in the playoffs after all those years. The Ballpark was packed and it seemed like the fans were yelling the entire game. It made me want to be a part of it."

Julio Franco is looking forward to

the first post-season of his 13-year ML career.

"It's every player's dream to get into the playoffs and win the World Series," he said. "It's something you always hope you can do."

"It really means a lot to me to have it happen here," he said. "I remember how things were the first time I played in Cleveland. I know what it means to the fans to have the Indians in the playoffs."



Kenny Lofton was involved in one of the most memorable moments in franchise history when he scored from second base on a passed ball in the eighth inning of Game 6 of the

American League Championship Series. His mad dash gave the Indians a 3-0 lead, put the game away, and helped put the Tribe in the World Series.

"I just went. They weren't paying attention.

“...The fans here are the greatest fans in the world. I’m going to try with all my heart to win this city a World Championship.”

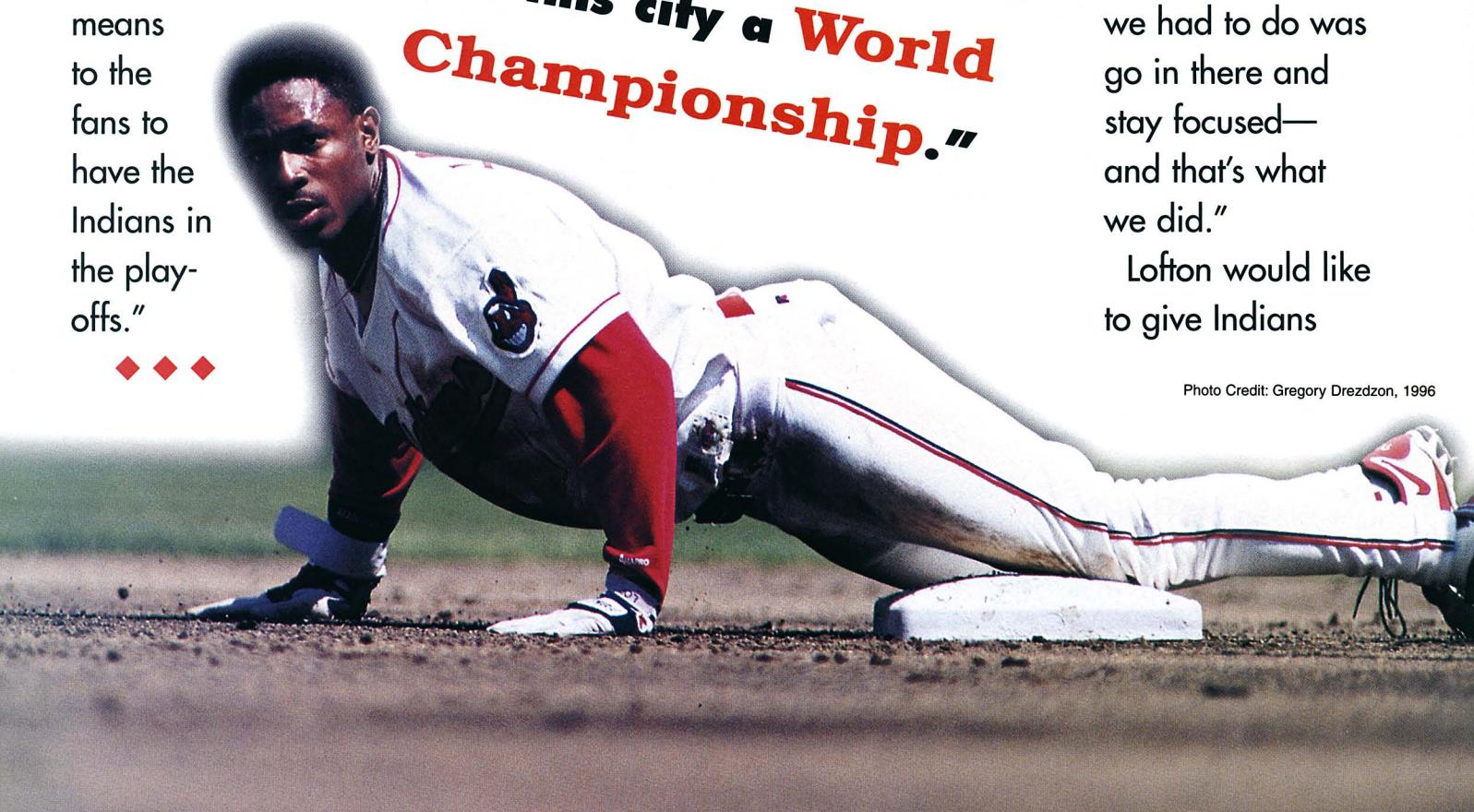
At first I wasn't going to try, but I was trying to bluff and run real hard to see how they would react. They never reacted, so I just kept running."

Lofton remembers that the Indians defeated Mariners ace Randy Johnson to get to the World Series.

"Everybody made a big deal about Randy Johnson pitching. He's a big deal, but all we had to do was go in there and stay focused—and that's what we did."

Lofton would like to give Indians

Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon, 1996



fans a World Series title.

"It's so exciting that the city of Cleveland has risen like it has—the fans here are the greatest fans in the world. I'm going to try with all my heart to win this city a World Championship."



First base coach Dave Nelson thinks that last year's playoffs will benefit the coaching staff this season.

"Looking back on it, there are things we can do differently to help the players be more prepared," he said. "Last year gave the coaches a good

idea of what we have to do. As coaches, we have to keep guys on an even keel. We have to prepare the players the best we can and help put them in a position to win."

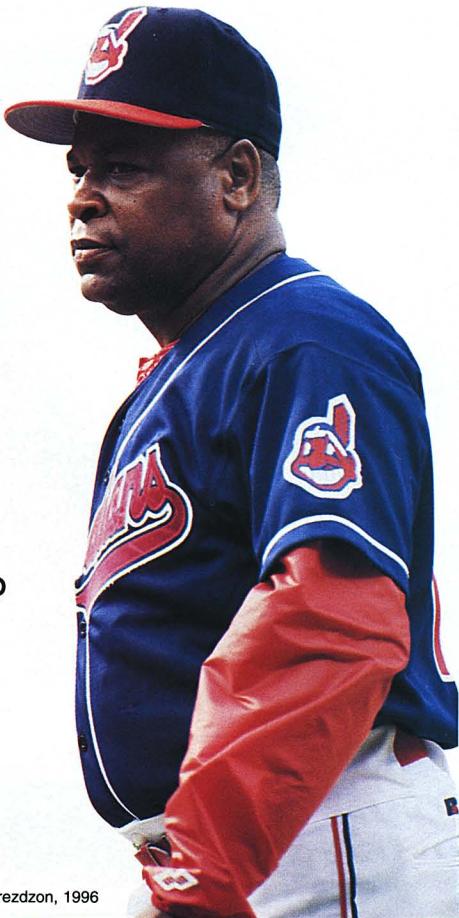


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Indians

HOW TO SCORE

Baseball fans can enjoy the sport to the fullest extent by keeping track of the game and pinpointing those big plays that bring victory or defeat. All you need is a basic knowledge of the rules.

Although there are countless scoring methods, experts use a simple code based on numbering players by position and tracing action through the use of symbols. It's easy and fun.

In fact, why not devise your own scoring system with the basic suggestions on this page.

One such suggestion on player substitutions is to use a heavy or wavy line under or over a box to indicate a change, either of a player or batter.

If a batter flies to the rightfielder, merely use the figure 9. If it is a foul fly, use 9F.

Now that you are an official "scorer," you can really enjoy baseball games.

Team	Pos.	1	2
Rightfielder	9	4-6 W	
2nd Baseman	4	3 ④FO	
1st Baseman	3	=	
Centerfielder	8	SF 8	
Designated Hitter	DH	K	
Leftfielder	7		4-6
Catcher	2		DP 4-6-3
3rd Baseman	5		≡
Shortstop	6		7
Pitcher	I		
TOTALS	R H	I I	I 2

Walked and was forced out at second (2nd baseman to shortstop).
 Reached first on fielder's choice when runner was forced out, advanced to third on double by 3rd place hitter, scored on 4th place hitter's sacrifice fly.
 Doubled; did not advance further.
 Flied out to center field scoring runner on third.
 Struck out—end of the inning.
 Singled; later forced out at second (2nd baseman to shortstop in first half of double play).
 Hit into double play (2nd baseman to shortstop to 1st baseman).
 Hit home run.
 Flied out to leftfielder—end of inning.

USE THESE SYMBOLS FOR PLAYS

— Single	FC Fielder's Choice	PB Passed Ball
= Double	HP Hit by Pitcher	BK Balk
≡ Triple	WP Wild Pitch	K Struck Out
☰ Home Run	SB Stolen Base	BB Base on Balls
E Error	SH Sacrifice Hit	FO Forced Out
F Foul Fly	SF Sacrifice Fly	IW Intentional Walk
DP Double Play	CS Caught Stealing	

CAN YOU SCORE

THIS PLAY?

The ball was hit to the shortstop, who threw it to the second baseman. The second baseman was able to force out the runner who had been at first. He then threw the ball to the first baseman to get the batter out, turning a double play.

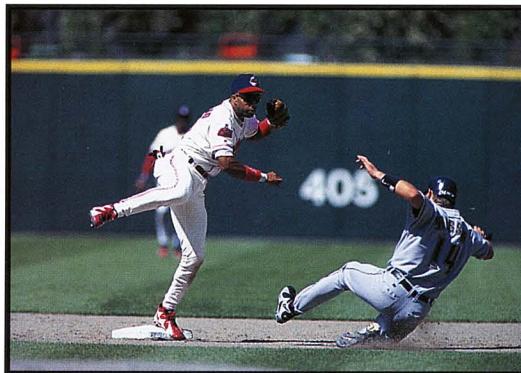
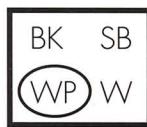


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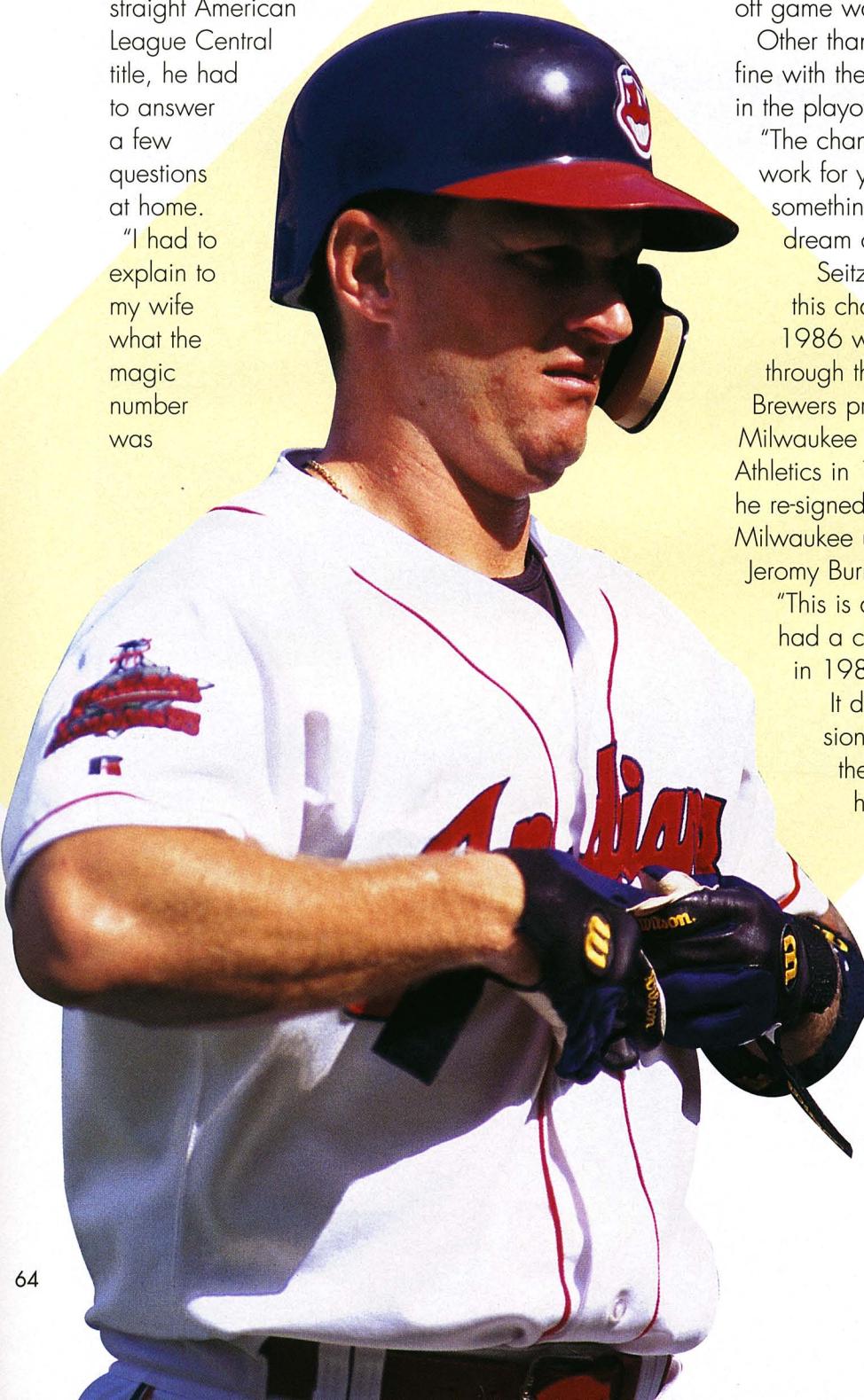


In this example, the hitter reached first base on a walk, stole second, advanced to third on pitcher's balk, scored on a wild pitch.

New Kids...

By Steve Herrick

Who said joining a first-place team was easy? Look at what happened to Kevin Seitzer when he was traded from the Milwaukee Brewers to the Indians on August 31. As the Indians counted down toward their second straight American League Central title, he had to answer a few questions at home. "I had to explain to my wife what the magic number was



and how you whittle it down," he said. "This is the first time that I had to be concerned about a magic number other than in a magic show."

Seitzer never had to worry about magic numbers, division titles, or the post-season before. In his days with the Kansas City Royals, Oakland Athletics, and Milwaukee Brewers, playing on a contending team was a rumor, and the only way he could see a play-off game was on television.

Other than that adjustment, Seitzer has fit in just fine with the Indians. And he's ecstatic about being in the playoffs for the first time.

"The chance to play in the post-season is what you work for your whole career," he said. "This is something every ballplayer dreams about. It's a dream come true."

Seitzer, 34, has been waiting a long time for this chance. He broke into the Major Leagues in 1986 with the Royals. He played in Kansas City through the 1991 season before signing with the Brewers prior to the 1992 season. He played in Milwaukee for one season and then signed with the Athletics in 1993. After being released that season, he re-signed with the Brewers. Seitzer stayed in Milwaukee until he was traded to the Indians for Jeromy Burnitz.

"This is all I ever hoped for," he said. "So far, I've had a couple of close seconds with Kansas City in 1987 and Milwaukee in 1992."

It didn't take Seitzer long to make an impression with his new team. In his first at-bat with the Indians against Texas on September 1, he doubled in a run. He ended up going 4-for-5 with two doubles in that game and has become a fixture in the second spot in the batting order.

Indians Manager Mike Hargrove has been watching Seitzer for a long time, and is glad he's on the Tribe's side.

"Kevin is a very good hitter, and has very good knowledge of why he's a good hitter," said Hargrove. "Kevin takes what the pitcher gives him and doesn't try to make something out of nothing."

Continued on page 68

On The Diamond

By Tom Bochenek

During this season of changes, Jose Vizcaino has stayed the course. Hey, if you think that's easy, try fielding these events, some of them unexpected, and don't make an error:

- You're an established shortstop who led the National League in fielding percentage in '95. You come to spring training in February and suddenly, you're moved to second base to make room for a rookie phenom.
- Your anxiety of an early season is fueled by the expected birth of a child. Suddenly, games take a back seat to the health and welfare of your family.
- You're enjoying the season of your life, ranking third in the National League in hitting in mid-June, when an ugly beaning incident bruises you physically and mentally.
- Finally, it's late July and you're hitting .300 and have established yourself as one of the premier defensive second basemen in the NL when the phone rings—you've been traded to an American League city you have never seen. All of the above happened to Vizcaino this season. But, Jose has handled these transitions and transactions with the demeanor of a seasoned pro.

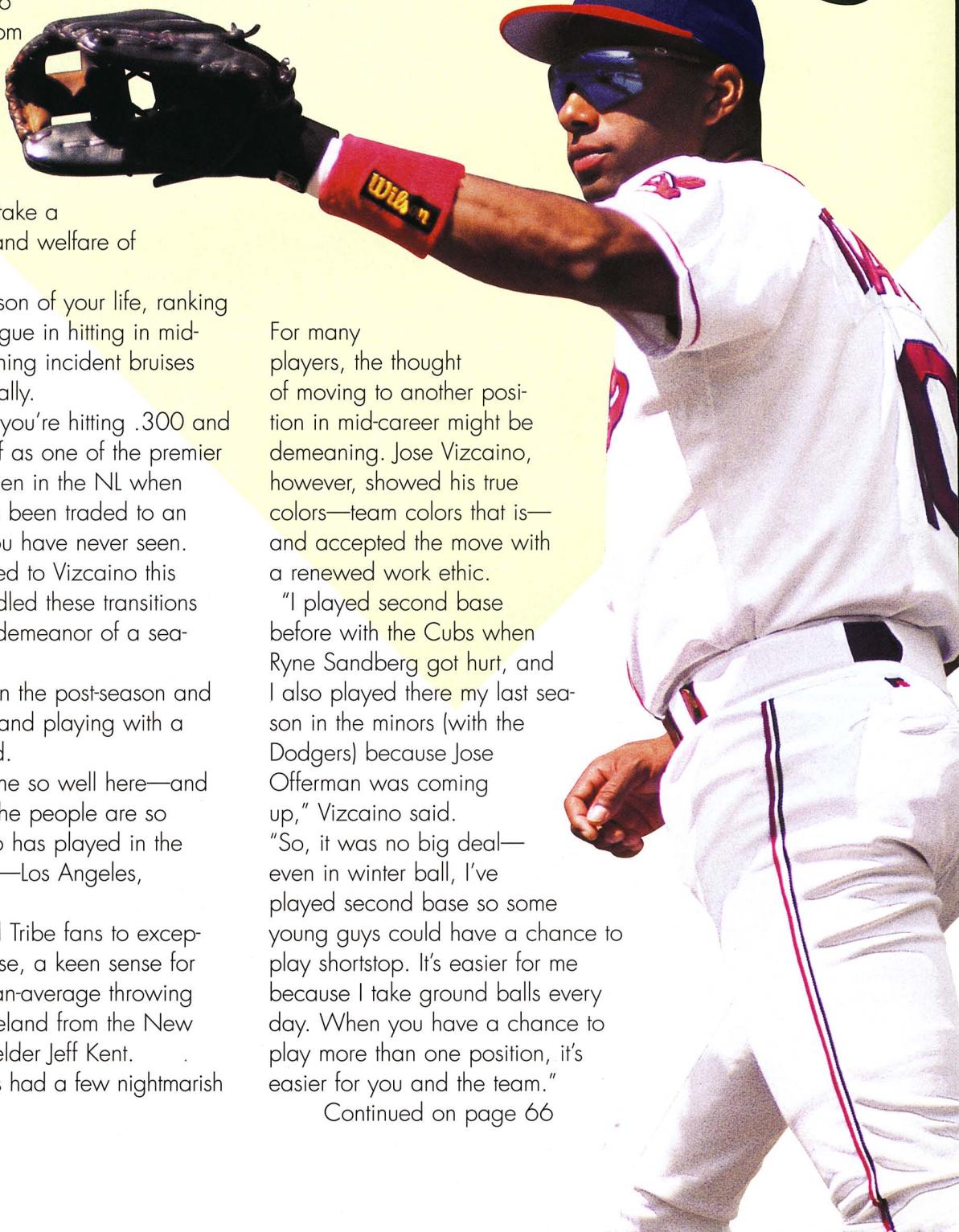
"This is a dream, being in the post-season and maybe the World Series, and playing with a great team," Vizcaino said.

"Everybody has treated me so well here—and this is such a nice area—the people are so friendly," added Jose, who has played in the nation's three largest cities—Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.

In return, Jose has treated Tribe fans to exceptional range at second base, a keen sense for the game, and a better-than-average throwing arm since coming to Cleveland from the New York Mets, along with infielder Jeff Kent.

Still, Vizcaino's dream has had a few nightmarish

moments this season. It started in spring training when then-Mets manager Dallas Green asked him to move from shortstop, where he led the NL with a .984 fielding percentage and just 10 errors in 610 chances in '95 and was named the MetLife "Met of the Year." The move was designed to make room for rookie phenom Rey Ordonez.



For many players, the thought of moving to another position in mid-career might be demeaning. Jose Vizcaino, however, showed his true colors—team colors that is—and accepted the move with a renewed work ethic.

"I played second base before with the Cubs when Ryne Sandberg got hurt, and I also played there my last season in the minors (with the Dodgers) because Jose Offerman was coming up," Vizcaino said.

"So, it was no big deal—even in winter ball, I've played second base so some young guys could have a chance to play shortstop. It's easier for me because I take ground balls every day. When you have a chance to play more than one position, it's easier for you and the team."

Continued on page 66

Vizcaino...

Vizcaino's positive attitude and team spirit paid off, ironically, at the plate. Batting second behind Lance Johnson, he sprayed line drives all over the National League and ranked in the top three in hitting for two months, reaching a .343 BA on June 11.

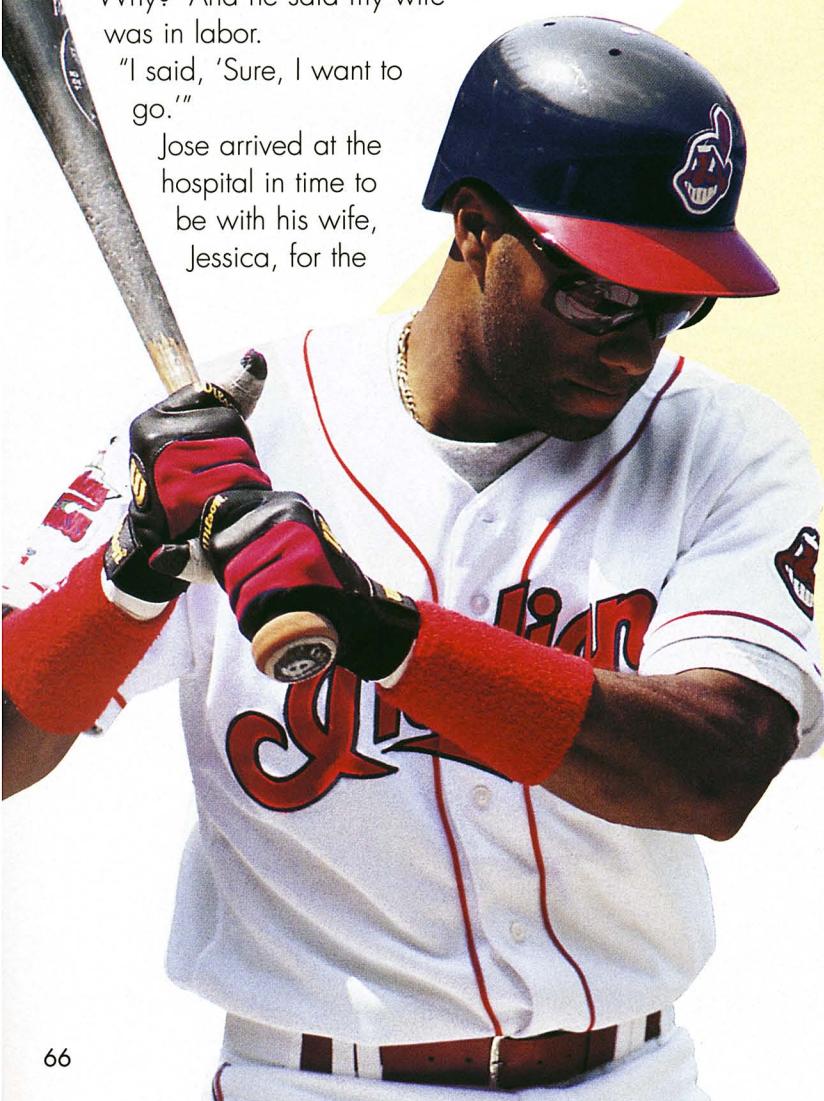
Then came another scary moment, one that could have damaged his career. Atlanta pitcher Steve Avery, upset with Vizcaino for celebrating a home run while trotting around the bases, threw at Jose in his next at-bat. The pitch hit Vizcaino in the knee, causing a severe bruise.

"It affected me because I was hitting so well and I had to sit down for a couple of games," said Jose, who initially vowed revenge against Avery but, true to his quiet nature, later recanted his anger. "Then, I came back earlier than expected. The knee bothered me for two weeks, but I didn't make excuses because I wanted to play."

But Jose did get an excused absence one Friday night in April. "Dallas (the Mets' manager) called me over and said, 'Do you want to go to the hospital?' and I said, 'Why?' And he said my wife was in labor.

"I said, 'Sure, I want to go.'"

Jose arrived at the hospital in time to be with his wife, Jessica, for the



birth of their third child. He got home at 1am, was at the hospital early the next day, then hustled to Shea Stadium for a game against the Rockies.

This time, Jose delivered. After grounding out four times, he smacked a game-winning single in the bottom of the tenth that gave the Mets a 4-3 triumph.

A week later, assured of his family's good health, Vizcaino etched his name in the Mets' record book when he had nine hits in nine at-bats, breaking the mark held by Jerry Grote and Keith Hernandez. It fell one hit shy of the NL record for most consecutive hits.

The first-half surge just reinforced the second half finish that Jose displayed last year when he batted .304 after the All-Star break, including a club-tying five-for-five game at Florida in September. That enabled him to finish with a career-tying .287 average.

"It's having a plan every day—to remember what I did wrong my last at-bat—to be more focused," he said. "When you work hard every day, it's going to pay off."

That work ethic was planted in Jose's mind on his family's farm in Palenque de San Cristobal, DR. Reared in a town that produced Major Leaguers Jose Rijo, Raul Mondesi, and Jose Uribe, and just one hour from Tribe closer Jose Mesa, Vizcaino had a twinkle in his eye for baseball. But, family chores were mandatory.

"I milked the cows every morning, then traveled three miles to deliver it," said Jose, who awoke every day at 5am to work, then went to school in the afternoon.

"Sure, you've got to be disciplined and my parents helped me a lot. My dad taught me to work hard and be prepared.

"One day, I told my mom that I wanted to be a baseball player."

In 1986, Vizcaino realized his ambition when he signed as a non-drafted free agent with the Dodgers. He arrived in the United States with a common problem facing many Latin players—communication.

"There were about 14 Latin players, and eight were from the Dominican," Jose related. "We didn't speak a word of English, so when we ordered lunch, we pointed to what we wanted to eat."

"A couple weeks later, they signed a guy from Puerto Rico who spoke both languages. He taught us how to say, 'May I have...'"

"Now, in the Dominican, most teams have a school, where they teach you English before coming here."

A language barrier huh? Well, that's the only course from which Jose Vizcaino has strayed.

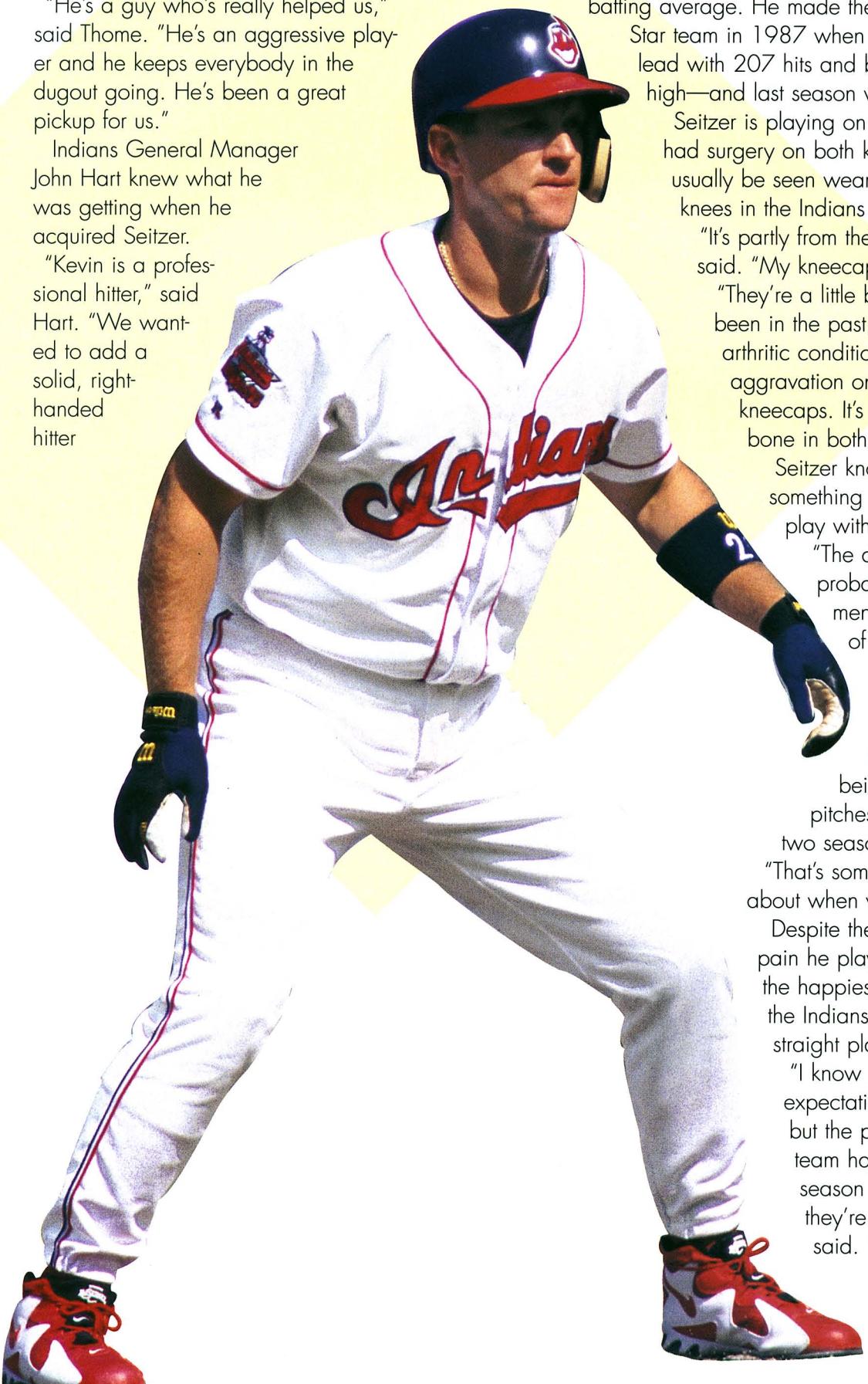
Seitzer...

Indians third baseman Jim Thome has quickly become a Seitzer fan.

"He's a guy who's really helped us," said Thome. "He's an aggressive player and he keeps everybody in the dugout going. He's been a great pickup for us."

Indians General Manager John Hart knew what he was getting when he acquired Seitzer.

"Kevin is a professional hitter," said Hart. "We wanted to add a solid, right-handed hitter."



to the lineup. That's what Kevin is."

Seitzer came into this season with a lifetime .292 batting average. He made the American League All-Star team in 1987 when he tied for the league lead with 207 hits and batted .323—a career-high—and last season when he hit .311.

Seitzer is playing on two bad knees. He had surgery on both knees in 1991 and can usually be seen wearing icepacks on his knees in the Indians clubhouse after games.

"It's partly from the way I was born," he said. "My kneecaps don't track properly.

"They're a little bit worse than they've been in the past," he said. "There's an arthritic condition and it causes a lot of aggravation on the back of the kneecaps. It's pretty much bone-on-bone in both knees."

Seitzer knows the bad knees are something he's going to have to play with the rest of his career.

"The doctors have said I'll probably need knee replacements when I reach the age of 50," Seitzer added.

Seitzer also plays with a facemask attached to the left side of his helmet, the result of being hit in the head by pitches in each of the last two seasons.

"That's something you can't think about when you're hitting," he said.

Despite the long career and the pain he plays with, Seitzer might be the happiest player on the team as the Indians make their second straight playoff appearance.

"I know there were a lot of expectations with this team, but the people who say this team has had a disappointing season don't know what they're talking about," he said. "This is a great team."

THE PLAYERS

